
NEWS From:

Reps. Honda, Matsui & Wu



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Asian American Reps. Demand Meeting With Rep. Coble to Discuss Internment During WWII & Current Homeland Security Concerns

WASHINGTON, Feb. 7, 2003 — Today, U.S. Representatives Mike Honda (D – CA), Robert T. Matsui (D – CA), and David Wu (D – OR) sent a letter to Rep. Howard Coble (R-NC), requesting to meet with him in order to better understand his views on the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, and for Rep. Coble to listen to their concerns regarding maintaining an appropriate balance of homeland security and constitutional civil rights.

On Tuesday, Feb. 4, Rep. Coble said he believed that the U.S. government's decision to send Japanese Americans to internment camps was justified. In 1983, the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, which investigated whether the internment was based on military necessity concluded that: "The broad historical causes that shaped these decisions were race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership."

Following is the complete text of the letter:

Dear Congressman Coble:

We write to you today concerning your recent comments regarding the internment of Japanese Americans. Your comments of Tuesday, February 4th, indicated that you believe the U.S. Government's decision to send Japanese Americans to internment camps was justified. We understand that you implied that this was done for their own safety and that some Japanese Americans during WWII "... probably were intent on doing harm to us."

The reality is that there is a preponderance of evidence to the contrary. The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians documented that President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Executive Order leading to the internment of Japanese Americans was not issued to protect Japanese Americans

from the U.S. population nor to protect U.S. interests from the Japanese American community. The report states:

In sum, Executive Order 9066 was not justified by military necessity, and the decisions that followed from it-exclusion, detention, the ending of detention and the ending of exclusion-were not founded upon military considerations. *The broad historical causes that shaped these decisions were race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership.* Widespread ignorance about Americans of Japanese descent contributed to a policy conceived in haste and executed in an atmosphere of fear and anger at Japan. A grave personal injustice was done to the American citizens and resident aliens of Japanese ancestry who, without individual review or any probative evidence against them were excluded, removed and detained by the United States during World War II. (Emphasis added).

National security is our highest priority. However, it is also important to us to protect the fundamental principles of the United States Constitution. Incarcerating citizens and legal resident aliens solely because of their ethnicity is neither compatible with the Constitution nor an effective way to make our nation more secure.

We will soon mark the 61st Anniversary of President Roosevelt's Executive Order. At a time when we should be reflecting on a historic wrong, it is especially important that we retain an accurate record of history. If we do not accurately portray the past, we risk repeating it.

In order for us to better understand your views on the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, and so that you may better understand our concerns for the appropriate balance of homeland security and constitutional civil rights, we would like to meet with you next week. Time is of the essence based on the very serious nature of the comments as reported.

We appreciate your immediate attention to this request.

Sincerely,

Mike Honda, M.C.
Robert T. Matsui, M.C.
David Wu, M.C.